

COMMISSIONERS APPROVAL

CHILCOTT *gc*

LUND *SL*

THOMPSON

TAYLOR (Clerk and Recorder)

Date.....August 21, 2006

Members Present.....Commissioner Greg Chilcott, Commissioner Betty Lund and Commissioner Alan Thompson

Minutes: Sally Fortino

The Board of County Commissioners met with Judy Griffin, Public Health Nurse, Charmell Owens, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and Skip Rosenthal, Human Resources, regarding the Bio Terrorism grant.

Judy said she has been collaborating with the State on the grant. Charmell said the contract language asks for two full-time emergency service coordinators. They have not sustained that portion of the grant, but have met most other criteria. The State is funneling more projects to the county, which brings in extra funding. They have asked if the extra funds generated by additional projects can be allocated to staff. Communicable diseases surveillance has grown exponentially; more grant writing is necessary. A new pandemic plan is required. Secretarial staff needs a different registry; additional records are necessary. She has talked to Skip about hiring additional staff. How that staff is identified is crucial for the grant. Judy said the Public Health Department would be overrun if there were a pandemic causing multiple deaths.

Charmell said the additional expenses could not be sustained without the grant. Her higher wage is contingent on the grant; she will return to the lower wage when the grant is ended. CDC allows them to carry over unspent money if it is used to upgrade the Public Health Department. If the salaries of the people who do additional work are supplemented, then those employees will return to their original wage when the grant has been met. They are taking online classes, traveling to conferences, etc.

Judy said it has been good to be able to attend classes in epidemiology. In the past the Public Health Department was focused on maternity issues, but new times bring new challenges. To be certified in communicable diseases has required additional classes and training. It is a new time for public health. Updates on computers, software systems, etc., have been required with a look into the future, rather than focusing on the present.

Charmell said the Public Health Department has shared some of their funding with related departments. When DES needed additional equipment they checked with the grant coordinators to see if they could help financially to furnish what DES needed. The grant should be around for at least another four years. The extra money is available because smaller Counties cannot keep up with the paperwork necessary to stay ahead of grant requirements. As the County population grows the number of new communicable disease cases increases.

Judy said the Norovirus outbreak was handled efficiently and therefore did not last. An outbreak can be massive in Counties where information is not distributed to the public and surveillance is not diligent.

Charmell said they hired Eric Hoover, who would be an asset in preparing for a pandemic. Getting the message to the public on quarantine and isolation is imperative. The State feels the department is being very careful with expenditures. They could hire another emergency services coordinator, but the person would need years of experience. Getting an RN is difficult, because the pay is very low. They had allocated for a part time RN, and didn't get one; that money will be carried over. They are asking that the department be able to sign some form that says the grants could be temporary, and wages will decrease should the grant not be renewed.

Commissioner Thompson asked if there are matching funds through any agency. Judy said there are not. She added the Public Health Department has ordered 5,000 doses of flu vaccine. The service should be offered by the Public Health Department, not the hospital. Unused doses can be sold to other Counties to recoup the cost of the vaccine.

Charmell said this was a big thing for the County. Some people at high risk should get the vaccine first. She added the grant has done some good things for the department, and they want to demonstrate the department's strengths.

Commissioner Chilcott said the workload has doubled for the present staff, with bio terrorism tracking. Is the workload validated? Charmell said all extra training and conferences hours are tracked.

Commissioner Chilcott suggested if they recovered the salaries and wages for the Public Health nurses it would free up money for more discretionary use in the department. Charmell said Judy's salary is the only one coming from the General Fund. Commissioner Chilcott said that places fewer strings on the General Fund, allowing them to redirect funding for lab supplies, etc. Judy added some vaccines come from that fund.

Commissioner Chilcott asked how the resignation of the County Health Officer would affect the Public Health office. Judy said it is possible another doctor would come on board; he will be in to check the office and staff this week. He is an ER physician whom Judy has known professionally. He would be a real asset for the County, but would be looking for more money. He is looking at many opportunities. Judy prefers having a

Medical Doctor as County Health Officer. She appreciates the direction an MD gives the office.

Commissioner Thompson said he has no concerns at this point. Skip said he would need bio terrorism information to do projections on salaries, etc., as well as a copy of the grant. Charmell said the grant runs from September 1st through August 31st of each year. Commissioner Thompson said he thinks of big cities when thinking of bio terrorism and pandemics. But all communities must be prepared, regardless of size. Judy said panic issues in larger cities could be huge problems.

Commissioner Lund said she saw no problem as long as the staff understands that salaries will return to the lower level if/when the grant expires. The Commissioners agreed Judy and Charmell should proceed with the fund as they outlined.

In other business the Board of County Commissioners met with Dave Bull and Dixie Dies of the Forest Service for an update of the status of fires in Ravalli County.

In other business the Board of County Commissioners met to sign the Certification for the Home Buyers' Program with HRC. Administrative Director Skip Rosenthal was present for the meeting. Skip reminded the Commissioners that the certification is necessary every year. Everything is in good order. Skip recommended execution of certification. Commissioner Thompson made a motion to have the Chairman of the Board sign the application for Home Buyers' Program. Commissioner Lund seconded the motion, and all voted 'aye'.

In other business the Board of County Commissioners met to discuss/decide on the Letter of Credit release on Bitterroot Heaven Subdivision. Ben Howell was present for the meeting.

Commissioner Chilcott clarified this is a 5-lot subdivision. Road certification demonstrates that requirements have been met and the Planning Department has recommended the Commissioners sign the release of the Letter of Credit.

Commissioner Lund made a motion to approve the release of the Letter of Credit; Commissioner Thompson seconded the motion, and all voted 'aye'.